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Communicative Competence in the Classroom

University — Université
University of Alberta

Degree for which thesis was presented — Grade pour lequel cette thèse fut présentée
Master of Education

Year this degree conferred — Année d'obtention de ce grade
1985

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COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1985

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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This thesis is dedicated to a future second language student,

my daughter Vanessa Barbara Weir, born July 28, 1984

ABSTRACT

Since the ability to communicate in the target language with a native speaker is the desired goal of most second language students, the study attempted to determine the level of communicative competence attained by junior high students in the French core program. More specifically, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What level of communicative competence is attained by junior high students who achieve success in the FSL (French as a Second Language) program?
2. What expectations about communicating in real-life settings, do students hold for themselves?
3. Is there a relationship between teacher marks in the FSL program and the students' ability to communicate in authentic situations?

For the purpose of this investigation, communicative competence was defined as the ability to converse or correspond with a native speaker of the target language in a real-life situation with emphasis on communication rather than on correctness of language form.

Thirty grade nine students from five different schools, enrolled in their third year French in the County of Strathcona, participated in the study. Sex, age and percentage grade in the French course were recorded for each student. A questionnaire measuring attitude toward French studies was administered. The students' assessment of their ability to communicate in French in a real-life setting was determined by using a self-assessment form. Finally, each pupil's level of communicative competence was measured using a communicative competence test, consisting of five communicative contexts.

The results of the study with respect to the students tested can be summarized as follows:

1. Most junior high students who achieved success in the FSL program demonstrated problems with respect to communication

in the second language. Their ability to communicate a message was hindered or completely impeded by an inadequate knowledge of French vocabulary and interrogative forms and a lack of skill in using them.

2. Few junior high students displayed an ability to converse or correspond with a native speaker of the target language. Even when they could, their conversation or correspondence seemed to be of a limited nature, confined to certain subject areas and restricted by the students' extent of French vocabulary.
3. Students who maintained the highest level of communicative competence possessed a greater knowledge of French vocabulary and interrogative forms than those in lower levels.
4. Most junior high students who achieved success in the FSL program demonstrated problems with respect to listening comprehension ability in the target language.
5. A student's level of communicative competence was not necessarily indicative of his listening comprehension ability.
6. More students who maintained the highest level of communicative competence also possessed a positive attitude toward French studies, than was the case at the lower levels.
7. The junior high students lacked confidence in their ability to communicate in the target language. They did not perceive themselves as being able to participate in the range of social situations necessary to everyday life under normal conversational conditions.
8. Age, sex and level of confidence did not appear to be related to a student's level of communicative competence.
9. Percentage grade or teacher mark awarded to a student in the French course, did not appear to reflect his level of communicative competence. Most students who maintained the highest level of communicative competence possessed a high percentage grade in the French course.

10. Percentage grade in the French course did not accurately reflect a student's aural ability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher wishes to offer praise and thanksgiving to her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who by the Holy Spirit fulfilled His promise as recorded in Psalms 37:5 - - "Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him to help you do it and He will."

Special thanks are extended to Dr. D.V. Parker for his constant guidance and help through the research study. The advice of the committee members, Dr. P. Platt and Dr. W. Samiroden, is also gratefully acknowledged.

Tribute must be paid to the principals, teachers, and students of the five schools in the County of Strathcona, No.20, for their cooperation in this study.

A special thanks goes to the researcher's husband for his support and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

LIST OF TABLES xi

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION 1

Background to the Problem 1

The Problem 4

Significance of the Study 5

Definitions, Delimitations and Limitations 6

Summary 7

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE 8

The Core Second Language Program 8

The Immersion Program 10

The Communicative Competence Approach to Second Language ... 11

Current Approaches to Measuring Communicative Competence ... 15

Summary 21

III. DESIGN OF THE STUDY 22

The Sample 22

Measurement 23

Scoring Procedures 26

IV. INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS 31

Performance on Tests of Communicative Competence 31

Performance on Tests of Attitude Toward French Studies and Relationship between Attitude and Communicative Competence 43

Performance on Tests of Self-Assessment and Relationship between Level of Confidence and Communicative Competence ... 44

Relationship between Age of Students and Communicative Competence and Relationship between Sex of Students and Communicative Competence 47

Relationship between Percentage Grade in the French Course (Achievement) and Communicative Competence 47

Summary of the Findings 55

CHAPTER PAGE

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS..... 57
Summary..... 57
Conclusions..... 59
Limitations of the Study..... 60
Implications for Education..... 61
Suggestions for Further Research..... 66

FOOTNOTES..... 68
BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 71
APPENDIX A. Method of Evaluation Questionnaire..... 76
APPENDIX B. Attitude Toward French Studies Questionnaire..... 77
APPENDIX C. Self-Assessment Form..... 82
APPENDIX D. Communicative Competence Test..... 85

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
I.	Means and Standard Deviations of the Scores for the Communicative Competence Subtests for Each Level of Communicative Competence	36 a
II.	Results of the Communicative Competence Subtests	3 6b
III.	Results for the Description of a Picture Sequence Subtest	42
IV.	Characteristics of Communicative Competence Levels in Terms of Age, Sex, Percentage Grade, Achievement, Attitude and Level of Confidence	46
V.	Responses for All Items of the Self-Assessment Form	48
VI.	Percentage Grades and Achievement Classifications Divided According to Level of Communicative Competence	52
VII.	Means and Standard Deviations of the Scores for the Communicative Competence Subtests for HA and AA	53
VIII.	Summary of t Statistic for HA and AA re: Communicative Competence Subtests	54

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

"... communicating ideas in a second language, while common, 'in the street', is still uncommon in many foreign language classrooms." (Joiner, 1977, p. 242).

Teachers of modern language have long paid lip service to the idea that communicative ability should be a major goal of second language learning. Unfortunately, "only a handful of those (who are) taught a foreign language in the classroom ever seem to reach a very high level of proficiency in that language" (Kennedy, 1973, p. 66). To too many second language students, the term 'dead language' not only refers to ancient and forgotten languages such as Latin or Classical Greek, but also seems to describe accurately their day-to-day experiences in the modern language classroom especially if activities consist of memorization of subject matter and automatic reproduction of responses, with little or no time devoted to authentic communication in real second language situations (Omaggio, 1976, p. 131).

The expectations held by the learners and parents about the core program, a second language program in which the target language is taught for short daily periods, often lead to disillusionment and discouragement. Students anticipate being able to understand and use

the language in real situations outside of the classroom, but are surprised and embarrassed when, instead of native-like fluency, they produce blundering, anglicized utterances. Parents, too, cannot understand why, after several years of French study, their children cannot read a French newspaper or comprehend French television programs. Furthermore, many modern language teachers realize that although their students do well on discrete-point exams of linguistic proficiency which test grammatical patterns and vocabulary items, this does not indicate that they are able to carry on a conversation in the second language. Some doubt that if their students were suddenly transported to a country where the target language was spoken, they would be able to order a meal, ask a new friend for a date or inquire about a railroad schedule at a train station (Wesche, 1981, p. 552-553). It is one thing to know about a language - its verb forms, vocabulary items, basic grammatical patterns - and quite another to know how to use it effectively in a conversational exchange with a native speaker (Savignon, 1978, p. 12).

In the midst of this growing dissatisfaction with the so-called 'core' programs, deserved or otherwise, the immersion program appeared as an innovative approach to second language learning. It has mesmerized modern language educators to the point that core programs are being neglected and devalued. During the last ten years, "immersion is the only way of learning another language", has become a Canadian credo of second language programs (Stern, 1982, p. 37). Since one of the important indicators of success in second language learning is the amount of instructional time spent on the language (Shapson, 1982, p. 50), it is not unexpected that the immersion

program may produce the desired communicative ability. Unlike the core program, which involves explicit second language instruction for x minutes per week beginning in grade y, the immersion program consists of a significant part of the school curriculum being taught using the target language, often right from kindergarten.

Although the immersion approach may be seen as a successful and exciting way to learn a second language, its drawbacks must not be overlooked. First, the majority of children have their only opportunity to learn a second language through the core approach. Second, there are not enough qualified teachers to operate immersion programs. Third, immersion programs incur extra expense. Fourth, language learning in many other countries is accomplished very successfully through the core program.

Thus, rather than rejecting the core program as an effective approach to second language learning, ways must be sought to remedy its major shortcomings. Critics who spoke out against the artificial drill exercises, the limited view of the language learning process and the unsubstantial content which were characteristic of some core programs, also emphasized the need to create opportunities for authentic communication in them, through the use of real, communicative activities. They further made a distinction between linguistic competence and communicative competence: linguistic competence being defined "as the mastery of the sound system and basic structural patterns of a language" and communicative competence, "as the ability to function in a truly communicative setting; that is, in a spontaneous transaction involving one or more other persons" (Savignon, 1978, p. 12).

The core program most often had stressed the former. What was needed in the core program, many felt, was an emphasis on communicative competence.

THE PROBLEM

Those responsible for the Alberta Education French Curriculum Guide for grades seven to nine, too, realize the importance of developing the skills necessary to communicate with others who use French. The view taken in this program is that emphasis be placed on enabling students to acquire basic communication skills in French and in encouraging students to exchange with others, messages of real interest to them. In accordance with proponents of the communicative competence approach, the guide states that "one of the underlying premises of the program is that the study of language must be combined with opportunities to use the language. Knowledge of linguistic elements, vocabulary, sounds, word formation and grammar, although important, does not automatically lead to the ability to use the language" (French Curriculum Guide, 1978, p. 64). The program lists specific verbal performances and linguistic content which students are expected to acquire in order to engage in communication.

Junior high French teachers in the County of Strathcona use the Alberta Education French Curriculum Guide as a basis for their second language programs. Therefore, one could assume that students who have successfully completed the program are able to communicate at a certain level using the target language. The purpose of this

investigation is to determine the level of communicative competence attained by junior high students in the French core program. More specifically, answers to the following questions are sought:

1. What level of communicative competence is attained by junior high students who achieve success in the 'French as a Second Language' (FSL) program?
2. What expectations about communicating in real-life settings, do students hold for themselves?
3. Is there a relationship between teacher marks in the FSL program and the students' ability to communicate in authentic situations?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

During the 1970's research attention focused on French immersion (Genesee, 1979; Lambert and Tucker, 1972; Swain, 1978 among others). Few major studies dealing with core FSL programs were conducted either outside or within Canada (Shapson, 1982, p. 48). More specifically, research in the area of communicative competence in core programs is very limited and what has been done was mainly conducted with first year college students. Studies conducted in this field with junior high students are scarce.

Since the ability to communicate in the target language with a native speaker is the desired goal of most second language students, this research study will attempt to determine whether students are achieving this goal through the core program. If results indicate

that students are not communicatively competent, suggestions will be made "to make a thorough improvement in the curriculum of core programs so the French core program becomes a true alternative to immersion and is no longer its 'parent pauvre'" (Stern, 1982, p.38).

DEFINITIONS, DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The following terms employed in this study are defined as follows:

1. Communicative competence will be defined as the ability to converse or correspond with a native speaker of the target language in a real-life situation, with emphasis on communication of ideas rather than on correctness of language form. The cultural aspect of communicative competence will not be considered.
2. Core program will refer to an FSL program which involves explicit second language instruction for x minutes per week beginning in grade y.
3. Immersion program will refer to an intensive second language approach which involves all or a significant part of the school curriculum being taught using the second language and beginning at any point from kindergarten to grade ten.
4. Success, referred to in the problem of this study will denote a passing grade in the course, that is, fifty percent or higher.

For the purpose of this study, only French core program students, in Grade Nine who have followed the Le Francais International (LFI) series since Grade Seven will participate. Instructors will be selected from among non-native speakers of French, using the LFI

series in class and basing their program on the Alberta Education French Curriculum Guide.

Since the testing of communicative competence is involved and lengthy, the study will include only a small sample of students (N=30). This limits the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the communicative competence tests, though previously employed by other researchers and maintaining a high degree of face validity, have not yet been proven to be valid statistically.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented a brief description of the present study in the relationship of communicative competence among second language learners. The purpose of the study was given, its significance, terms defined and delimitations and limitations were pointed out.

The remaining chapters of this study are organized as follows:

CHAPTER II: A review of the related literature pertaining to this study.

CHAPTER III: A description of the research design, the method of gathering data and the scoring procedures employed.

CHAPTER IV: An interpretation of the statistical analysis and discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER V: The summary of the study, conclusions based on the findings, the implications for education and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In the past decade, modern language researchers have paid increasing attention to the communicative aspect of language, as opposed to an earlier grammatical emphasis. This shift has led to widespread rethinking about what the content and teaching strategy of second language courses should be. More recently, increased heed has been given to how the communicative competence of second language speakers can be tested. In this review, the following have been employed as headings for the discussion of the literature relevant to this study: the core second language program; the immersion program; the communicative competence approach to second language learning; current approaches to measuring communicative competence.

THE CORE SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Core programs are those in which the target language is taught for short periods of classtime, typically on a daily basis. Until the 1960 s, second language instruction in the core program stressed mastery of the formal grammar of the target language; this approach to second language instruction was known as the 'grammar-translation' or 'traditional' approach[1]. The assumption of this approach was that proficiency in a language can be acquired by learning a set of

grammatical rules and by mechanically applying these rules.

The sixties introduced a new approach to second language learning - the 'audiolingual' approach. Its assumption was that language learning is a behavioral skill and not an intellectual discipline. Teachers trained in the audiolingual approach were taught that mastery of the mechanics of a language ensured communicative proficiency. Class time was spent in learning activities such as rote repetition, memorization of dialogues and performance of pattern drills. Exact pronunciation was expected and errors were to be avoided. When errors did occur, they were to be corrected immediately with class repetition and practise of the model phrase. Grammar was to be presented inductively. The ultimate goal of the audiolingual approach was to acquire the ability to communicate with native speakers of the target language. However, owing to a heavy insistence on accuracy and on shielding the student from the possibility of making a mistake, this was rarely accomplished.

Broadly speaking, the characteristics of today's core program in French represent a fusion of these two approaches to second language learning. While there is still an emphasis on oral use of the language, there has been a return to the study of grammar. However, there are yet characteristics of the current programs which are being criticized: taking too narrow a view of language by concentrating on its linguistic aspect in terms of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary and neglecting its cultural, sociolinguistic and communicative components; operating with too limited a conception of the language learner and language learning process through an over-emphasis on accuracy and not enough on conveying the message; failing to realize the educational potential

of second language learning; setting up courses which are repetitive and not well articulated; supporting language learning programs whose content is unsubstantial and trivial (Stern, 1982, p. 38).

THE IMMERSION PROGRAM

To overcome some of these objections, the immersion program was developed. The immersion program involves a classroom situation in which the various subjects are presented using the target language and by a bilingual teacher who is a native speaker or who has acquired native-like fluency. The program may vary in intensity of instruction in the target language from fifty percent of the students' academic content to one hundred percent, and may begin at any point from kindergarten to grade ten. Aspects of immersion curriculum consist of the regular English language arts program, the subject matter presented in the language being studied and attention to the cultural element of the target language. Since the immersion experience extends over a number of years and requires virtually the whole school day, it is seen as an effective method of developing communicative competence in students beyond the level usually attained through the core program.

While bilingual or immersion programs are offered in a variety of languages, French immersion programs, in particular, are now conducted in every Canadian province and in most urban centers. Evaluations of these immersion situations have indicated positive results: the development of French communication skills of students enrolled in immersion programs is far greater than that acquired by students in

French core programs; students in early immersion, although initially behind in their development of English skills attain equal status with non-immersion students by the late primary grades; students taught subjects such as mathematics or geography in French achieve as well as their English counterparts on tests administered in either language; immersion produces no signs of cognitive retardation (Swain, 1975, p. 14). More specifically, in a study directed by Lambert (1974, p. 112), early immersion students showed "no evidence of deficit in any aspect of English-language competence including reading skills or complex vocabulary development" at the end of grade six. The same group was slightly behind their French-language peers in the development of complex vocabulary, scored higher than sixty percent of their French-language peers on the test of French reading skills and wrote French compositions which were less developed content-wise but as correct grammatically. In summary, the immersion students, researched by Lambert, possessed oral communicative skills equal to their French peers, written skills which were nearly equivalent and an inferior mastery of French vocabulary, grammar, and accent.

THE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE APPROACH TO SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

In general, though results of French immersion are impressive, these programs are not always available to the majority of French language learners. These will usually learn the French language within a core program of second language study. With this in view, ways must be sought to remedy the problems in the core language program so that students may reach their goal of being able to

communicate with a native speaker of the target language in real-life situations. The communicative competence approach to teaching French in the core program is one such way to achieve this goal. Since this approach stresses meaningful use of the language with reference to the real world, simulations of linguistic transactions are plausible if not actual, and the goal is creative and spontaneous use of the target language rather than linguistic accuracy.

Proponents of communicative competence emphasize the definition of communication. They define it as an exchange of new information between two or more persons; that is, one actually learns from the conversation. Communicative competence theorists also define communication as a two-way exchange; students must initiate as well as respond. Thus, question forms must be learned early by second language learners. Finally, individuals involved in the field of communicative competence state that communication must be realistic and meaningful to the students, implying that ideas for communicative activities must be based on actual experiences and interests of the students (Knop, 1981, p. 725-726).

Several research studies maintain that language is best learned in meaningful situational contexts that meet the communicative needs of the learner. Using classes of college French students, study results were tabulated which compared the effects of two treatments: the 'drill' treatment which involved asking students for cued responses and the 'contextual' treatment which involved asking students to describe or refer to the actual state of affairs in their environment. Highly significant findings favored the 'contextual' treatment as a method of instruction (Jarvis and Hatfield, 1971, pp. 401-410). Oller

and Obrecht (1968, p. 166) also conducted an experiment which indicated that "language skills learned through pattern drill are made more readily available to the student for communicative purposes if those drills are deliberately related to meaningful communicative activity during the teaching-learning process". Research on retention and memory also indicates that meaningfulness facilitates learning and improves retention (Stevick, 1976, p. 14).

Communicative competence deals not only with the verbal behavior of a linguistic code but also with the non-verbal behavior. Success in learning to communicate in a second language depends on an individual's resourcefulness "in making use of the lexical and syntactical items which he has at his command and on his knowledge of the paralinguistic and kinesic features of the language - linguistic accuracy in terms of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary is but one of the major constituents in this complex interaction" (Savignon, 1972, p. 9).

Intimately linked to non-verbal behavior are the sociolinguistic patterns characteristic of the culture being studied. Two objectives of proponents of communicative competence are to teach students to be aware of the sociolinguistic differences across cultures and then to teach them to follow the rules for the society in conversational encounters. Rules of sociolinguistic behavior include such items as learning when it is appropriate to speak and with whom, what topics are appropriate to which speech events and which forms of address to use, to whom, and in which situations. Within the realm of sociolinguistic behavior, Kramsch (1981, p. 93) declares that native speakers have a whole range of verbal strategies at their disposal

to fulfill such functions as intervening, discussing and argumenting. Through observation of the performance of real speakers and hearers in actual situations, she believes that these strategies can be identified and subsequently taught to second language students in order to improve their communicative abilities.

Underlying these major principles of communication is the main tenet of communicative competence: students only learn to communicate by communicating. Savignon (1972, pp.15-18) designed a study which demonstrated that communicative competence can be improved by specific, meaningful activities, created for its development. Forty-two beginning French students at the University of Illinois were divided into three groups. Two groups were experimental (E_1 and E_2) and the third group was control (C). All groups spent four weekly 50-minute periods learning basic linguistic skills. The fifth day, the 50-minute session was devoted to the training and performing of specific communicative acts for E_1, the viewing of films or discussing French culture (in English) for E_2 and the practicing of pattern drills and basic course material in the language laboratory for C. At the end of a semester, all students were given a traditional discrete-point exam to test linguistic competence, specific structural and lexical items of the language, plus a communicative competence exam. It consisted of a discussion, an interview with a native speaker and two oral reports. Results indicated that there were no significant differences among the three groups for the traditional discrete-point exam of linguistic competence. However, E_1, who received the communicative competence training, performed significantly better ($p < .001$) than E_2 and C on the communicative competence test. These

results demonstrate that students learn what they have opportunities to do. That is, if students are not given the opportunity to use the language components which modern language teachers present to them in meaningful situations, they will not learn to use the language for communicative purposes.

Savignon is not advocating that modern language teachers eliminate linguistic competence. It is obvious that communication would be difficult without previous structured practise; students must learn and internalize vocabulary, grammatical structures and pronunciation of language. However, she is emphasizing that students must have opportunities for communicative activities, if they are to learn to communicate on their own (Savignon, 1981, p. 241).

CURRENT APPROACHES TO MEASURING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Proponents of the communicative competence approach have become aware of certain problems in the field, a major one being that of devising valid, realistic exams to test communicative ability. At present, the development of communicative tests is yet in its infancy (Wesche, 1981, p. 554; Whiteson, 1981, p. 347).

Most exams in second language learning concentrate on testing specific structural and lexical items. These discrete-point tests are very convenient to administer but do not measure general language proficiency. Communicative competence tests, on the other hand, strive to provide useful information about functional language ability. That is communicative competence tests should approximate to real tasks of communication. These tests are sometimes referred to as

proficiency tests since they aim at determining the examinee's ability to receive or transmit information in the target language for some useful purpose within a real-life setting (Dykstra, 1972, p. 24).

Most critics agree that communicative competence tests should demonstrate the following characteristics: integrative rather than discrete-point; direct rather than indirect; criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced. Integrative tests measure global language ability, presenting language in discourse level. Discrete-point tests concentrate on specific structural and lexical items, while dealing with one skill. Researchers like Oller (1974, p. 241) maintain that the testing of discrete points of structure cannot constitute an exam of communicative competence, and that integrative and pragmatic tests most validly measure language proficiency.

In communicative competency testing, the exams should be as direct as possible, that is, involving the actual performance of the task in a real-life situation. An ideal procedure in this respect would be to transport the student to the foreign country where the target language is spoken and have him perform certain communicative functions in a restaurant, a train station or a store, and then to observe and listen to his performance. Since practicality rules out such an approach, tests must be devised which approximate or simulate, as closely as possible, these real-life situations. For example, a direct test of listening comprehension may involve the presentation of taped radio broadcasts complete with the static; a direct test of reading comprehension would involve the use of actual magazine articles and newspaper reports; a direct test of oral communication could

involve the examinee engaging in a communicative dialogue.

Indirect testing involves using a sample of unrelated behavior to predict how the student will perform in the eventual, authentic situation. For example, the 'cloze' technique, in which the examinee is asked to resupply letters or words that have been systematically deleted from a continuous text, would be an indirect method of assessing speaking ability. Indirect measures are often favored for reasons of practicality. However, some researchers state that indirect tests of proficiency are not realistic measures of communication and thus, a direct test of communicative competence is essential (Wesche, 1981, p. 556).

Finally, communicative competency tests should be criterion-referenced, measuring a student's progress toward a certain objective and an externally-developed level of performance. In norm-referenced testing, the purpose is to compare the level of performance of individuals with the standard of performance of others in the class.

It is apparent that if communicative competence is indeed a major goal in foreign language instruction, this goal must be evaluated. Testing procedures based on a determination of the accuracy and extent of a student's linguistic command of the target language using discrete-point exams, although fulfilling a purpose, cannot serve to measure directly his communicative ability. What is needed are tests of communicative competence in which the student's performance is evaluated not on the basis of accuracy of morphology and syntax, and excellence of pronunciation, but rather in terms of adequacy in which the student can communicate in specified language-use situations (Clark, 1972, p. 120). Following are several approaches

which have been developed in an attempt to measure communicative competence.

The best known approach to measure communicative competence in a direct manner is a face-to-face interview developed by the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State known as the 'FSI Interview'. For a period of up to thirty minutes, the examinee sits and converses in an informal setting with one or two examiners who are native or near-native speakers of the target language. The examiners engage the examinee in conversations of varying topics and degree of linguistic difficulty and sometimes in a simulated situation where the examinee becomes an interpreter. At the conclusion of the interview, the examinee's total performance is rated as corresponding to one of five levels of communicative competency, ranging from 'elementary proficiency' to 'native or bilingual proficiency', each level being defined by detailed verbal description of the types of language-use situations in which the examinee would be able to function.

A communicative competence test, based on the student's ability to produce or comprehend a message in the foreign language, was designed by Savignon (1972, pp.41-49). It consisted of a discussion with a speaker, information-getting via an interview with a native speaker, reporting on a given topic, and a description of an actor performing a variety of activities. Savignon used different criteria to evaluate the distinct parts of the communicative competence test. She employed six-point scales ranging from 'none' to 'great' for criteria such as effort to communicate, amount of communication, naturalness and poise.

Schulz and Bartz (1975,pp.85-86) used similar techniques to those

of Savignon for their speaking tests. In addition, they developed communicative tests for writing, listening and reading skills. For the writing test, each student was given an ad in the newspaper advertising a position for which he was to apply by writing a resume of his background in the target language.

Rose et al. (1973, p. 237) devised a test of children's communicative skills. Two children seated opposite one another, are tested at a time. Each one has a magnetic board with kitchen and classroom scenes and identical sets of objects. One child's board shows each object in place in the picture; the other child has an empty board, the objects being on the table in front of him. The former must communicate to the latter where to put the objects. No gestures are allowed and the interchanges are taped.

Palmer (1972, pp.237-238) has developed two tests, COMTEST and PROTEST, which are useful and practical measures of oral communicative competence. For the COMTEST, the examiner and examinee are given identical sets of pictures, five sets of stick drawings and five sets of magazine pictures. Given an alloted amount of time, the examinee must identify correctly the picture held in mind by the examiner by asking questions for information. For the PROTEST, the examiner holds up a card indicating which of the set of pictures the student is to describe. Referred to also by other researchers as a 'free speech task' or a 'free production test', the examinee's task is to respond to a pictorial or topical stimulus by telling or writing about it. Scoring is achieved by judging the complexity and completeness of the response.

A student's communicative competency is also determined in the Association of Recognized English Language Schools (ARELS) Oral Examination. There are six sections to this tape-recorded test: 'social situations' where the student hears a comment and is asked to say the most natural thing in the circumstance; reading a newspaper article aloud; being involved in a taped conversation; answering questions about a newscast; talking for three minutes about a set of pictures; delivering a one and a half minute persuasive talk. The tapes are graded for naturalness of language and are marked "by impression and not under categories item by item" (Jorstad, 1974, p. 239).

The aforementioned methods of testing communicative competence approach direct proficiency testing. Though optimal, this type of testing is often time consuming and costly for the second language classroom teacher. No matter how highly valid and reliable a testing method may be, it is not useful for classroom application unless it remains within reasonable limits of cost, manpower requirements and time constraints. As a result, several indirect and more practical means of testing communicative competence have been employed; the 'cloze' test in which every 'n'th word is deleted from a running passage (Oller, 1972, p. 151); composition (Jorstad, 1974, p. 244); a noise test using pre-recorded sentences for dictation, divided into five groups disturbed by different degrees of noise (Spolsky et al., 1974, p. 245); dictation (Oller, 1974, p. 246); translation (Jackson, 1974, p. 247). A few researchers have found that some of these indirect tests correlate highly with more direct tests of communicative competence. They feel that these indirect methods permit reasonably

accurate predictions of the level of competency that the student would demonstrate if he were to undergo the more direct test. However, Clark (1974, pp.234-235) states that correlations would have to be practically perfect for indirect tests of proficiency to be realistic measures of communication. Further, indirect tests rob the student of an opportunity to use the target language in realistic communication situations.

An important consideration in the development of a communicative competence test is the scoring procedure. The main criterion for this test should be the student's ability to produce or comprehend a message in the target language. Linguistic errors which the student makes should not be considered unless they interfere with conveyance of the message. Scoring of the communicative competence exam is subjective on the part of the evaluator since he is giving his total impression of the student's communicative ability. Thus, the reliability of the test is in question since individual scoring tendencies of the raters may result in the differing scores, rather than differing degrees of student communicative competence.

SUMMARY

Although faced with the problem of devising valid, reliable and realistic exams to test communicative ability, proponents of the communicative competence approach are advocating a viable method of improvement for core programs, so that they become a true alternative to immersion for students learning a second language.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The present research may be classified as descriptive in that it was designed to describe certain phenomena relating to communicative competence in the classroom.

THE SAMPLE

The study involved a total of thirty subjects (N=30) selected from grade nine students enrolled in core French classes in schools in the County of Strathcona No. 20 Public School System. Subjects had to have begun FSL classes in Grade Seven and to have continued into Grade Nine using Le Francais International (LFI) series. Any student who had had external experience with French was excluded from the study.

Subjects were selected from the classes of five teachers in the system who were selected according to the following criteria:

a) similarity in backgrounds - all were non-native speakers of French and formally trained as French second language teachers;

b) similarity in course material - all were using the Alberta Education French Curriculum Guide for grades seven to nine and LFI series as a course textbook.

Six students were selected from each teacher's classes. Three of the six students chosen were High Achievers (HA), defined as students whose grade in French as assigned by the teacher was 80% or better, and three were Average Achievers (AA), defined as students whose grade in French as assigned by the teacher was between 60% and 70%.[2]

An attempt was made to select an equal number of males and females. However, the low male population in the second language classes compelled the researcher to choose more females (N=19) than males (N=11).

The five second language teachers were interviewed to: confirm that the chosen subjects did commence FSL studies in Grade Seven in the County of Strathcona No. 20 Public School System and continued into Grade Nine; confirm that the three subjects chosen as HA could be classified as such and likewise, the three subjects chosen as AA could be classified as such. Each teacher completed a questionnaire regarding her method of evaluation (APPENDIX A).

MEASUREMENT

Sex, age and percentage grade in the French course were recorded for each student. The percentage grade was a fairly accurate representation of the student's year's work since it was noted by the researcher at the beginning of June.

A questionnaire measuring the student's attitude toward his French studies was administered (APPENDIX B).

The student's assessment of his ability to communicate in French in a real-life setting was determined using a self-assessment form (APPENDIX C), adapted from a questionnaire designed by Oskarsson (1980, p. 45). His evaluation instrument comprised thirty statements representing different topics in the 'Threshold Level' specification.[3] Students were to estimate their command of the language by putting a cross in the 'Yes' or 'No' box for each statement. If their total number of 'Yes' crosses was twenty-five or above, and if their judgement of their own language ability proved to be fairly accurate, they were likely to have reached the 'Threshold Level' in the target language.

The researcher made revisions to this form in order that the communicative functions listed would correspond to the course content of the students' French program. In addition, students were asked to choose from among three responses, 'Yes_1' (Yes with no problems), 'Yes_2' (Yes but with difficulty) and 'No', in estimating their ability to communicate in French for each question.

Finally, each student participated in a test which was developed to measure his communicative competence, that is, his ability to communicate in French in real-life settings. This test whose components were derived from the researchers indicated consisted of five different communicative contexts:

1. Information-getting via an interview with a native speaker (Savignon, 1972, p. 43);
2. A problem-solving situation;
3. A description of a picture sequence (Clark, Swinton, 1979, pp.19-20)

4. A simulated telephone conversation (Schulz, Bartz, 1974, p. 85);

5. Selective listening (Valette, 1977, p. 109) (APPENDIX D).

The above communicative contexts were chosen for the following reasons:

a) They represent a typology of the situations in which the students will have to use the second language after their school or training period; that is, they reflect quite closely real-life situations and thus enjoy a high degree of face validity.

b) The linguistic content required for the communicative situations is within the limits of the students' French program.

c) They can be feasibly administered in the school situation given a limited amount of time, manpower and money.

Among the five communicative competence subtests, a distinction should be made between language production tests and language comprehension tests. The language production tests require the students to express themselves either in speaking or in writing; these tests are valid measures of the ability to produce the target language. In terms of a communication orientation, language production tests of oral expression focus on conveying meaning rather than on the grammaticality of the message. Examples of this type of test are the problem-solving situation and the description of a picture sequence. The language comprehension tests measure whether students can understand what they hear or read. Language comprehension tests measuring

listening comprehension ability involve the extraction of specific material from either a recording or a live monologue or dialogue. Frequently, a student is allowed to reply in his native language since the focus is on obtaining information and not on production. The telephone conversation and selective listening subtests are examples of this type of test. The information-getting subtest is a combination of the skills of listening comprehension and oral expression and thus, it is both a language production test and a language comprehension test.

SCORING PROCEDURES

Attitude Toward French Studies Questionnaire

The questionnaire measuring the student's attitude toward his French studies was scored by totalling the number of responses categorized as either positive (P), neither positive nor negative (NPNN) and negative (N). The majority of responses indicated by each student, whether positive, neither positive nor negative or negative, reflected the overall assessment of his attitude.

Self-Assessment Form

The self-assessment form, designed to indicate the student's perception of his communicative competence, was scored as follows: two points for answer 'Yes_1' (Yes with no problems), one point for answer 'Yes_2' (Yes but with difficulty) and zero points for answer 'No'. The student's "Level of Confidence" was then determined from the total number of points scored, according to the following rating

scale:[4]

Total No. of Points	Level of Confidence
60-50	Level I = Threshold (Van Ek, 1975)
49-46	Level II = Waystage (Trim, 1980)
45-15	Level III = Survival (Trim, 1980)
14-0	Level IV = Ineffective use of language

Communicative Competence Test

The communicative competence test does not lend itself to easy grading. Since the focus is on conveying meaning rather than on the grammaticality or pronunciation of the message, the students' performance was evaluated according to the kind and amount of information transmitted. Since there was the risk of a degree of subjectivity in the scoring, the researcher elected to make the process as uniform as possible by doing all the scoring herself.

The subtests were scored as follows:

1. Information-getting: This test represents an interaction with a native French person who responds only to the French language. Students were asked to interview the native speaker and to find out as much as they could about him in four minutes. They took notes as they conducted the interview and then wrote up the information received in English. The interview was taped and the researcher was present, recording observations. Students were evaluated on the accuracy and the amount of information they reported. One point was given for each correct statement about the native

speaker.

2. Problem-solving Situation: This test represents a real-life situation where the student must use the target language in order to solve the problem or predicament in which he finds himself. The problem was presented to the student in English and he was allowed one minute to organize his ideas before communicating in French. Student responses were taped and the researcher was present, recording observations. Three points were scored if the student's response solved the problem, two points if the response partially solved the problem, one point if a response was attempted but did not solve the problem and zero points if no response was given.

3. Description of a picture sequence: For this test, the student sees a set of six line drawings depicting a chronologically ordered sequence of events and is asked to tell the story that the pictures tell, using the target language. The student was given thirty seconds to study the pictures before describing the event. Student responses were taped and the researcher was present, recording observations. Two aspects of the response were evaluated - the extent to which the message was communicated and quality of the message. The extent to which the message was communicated was scored as follows: three points if the message was clear, coherent and complete, two points if the message was incomplete, that is, one had to fill in the gaps, one point if the message was incomprehensible and zero points if no response was given. The quality of the message was scored as follows: one point for each different verb, adjective and

common noun correctly used with regard to meaning. A verb employed in the incorrect tense was awarded a point if meaning was not hindered.

4. Simulated telephone conversation: This test represents a real-life situation where the student must extract specific material from a tape-recorded telephone call and then write up the message in English. The situation was presented to the student in English, he listened to a recording of a telephone call and then wrote the message. Students' communicative ability was evaluated according to the accuracy of the written message. It contained five important pieces of information for which the students were awarded one point each.
5. Selective listening: This test represents a real-life situation which involves the extraction of specific material from a recording. It places the student in the role of a tourist in a railway station. The researcher told the student in English that he was in a train in the Paris railway station and that his destination was Lyon. A series of tape-recorded announcements was then heard by the student as if over the loudspeaker in the train station. One of the announcements was a relevant piece of information to which the student had to react accordingly. After the recording, the student told the researcher, in English, what he had to do. His response was evaluated according to whether or not he correctly understood the message.

Of the above communicative competence subtests, the last two involved the listening comprehension process. In order to increase the validity of the tests, the following criteria were adhered to:

a) Since in most real-life listening situations, the listener will not have the message repeated, the auditive stimuli were presented once only.

b) Although memory plays an important role in the listening comprehension process, it should not be heavily taxed in a communicative competence test. Thus, the length of the language samples was restricted to thirty to forty-five seconds (Groot, 1975, p. 50).

CHAPTER IV

INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

In this chapter the following aspects of the data obtained in the study will be examined:

a) Performance On Tests of Communicative Competence;

b) Performance On Tests of Attitude Toward French Studies And Relationship Between Attitude and Communicative Competence;

c) Performance On Tests of Self-Assessment and Relationship Between Level Of Confidence And Communicative Competence;

d) Relationship Between Age of Students And Communicative Competence And Relationship Between Sex Of Students And Communicative Competence;

e) Relationship Between Percentage Grade In the French Course (Achievement) And Communicative Competence.

PERFORMANCE ON TESTS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Overview

Communicative competence, defined as the ability to converse or correspond with a native speaker of the target language in a real-life situation with emphasis on communication of ideas rather than on correctness of language form, was tested in five different communicative contexts:

1. Information-getting via an interview with a native speaker
2. A problem-solving situation
3. A description of a picture sequence
4. A simulated telephone conversation
5. Selective listening to announcements in a train station.

These communicative contexts reflect quite closely real-life situations. The interview involved the student in an exchange with a native speaker. The problem-solving context placed the student in an emergency situation where he had to use the target language to solve the predicament in which he finds himself. The description of a picture sequence context represented a real-life setting in which the student narrates a series of events such as he would do in describing, for example, what he did the night before or on the weekend. The simulated telephone conversation context placed the student in the home of a native speaker where he had to answer the phone, comprehend a message and then relay it to the right person. The selective listening context required the student to play the role of a tourist in a train station who must listen for the relevant announcement and react accordingly.

Results of the communicative competence test were evaluated with an emphasis on communication of ideas rather than correctness of language form. For the information-getting subtest, the student received a point for each accurate piece of information he reported about the native speaker. In the problem-solving situation, the student was awarded from three to zero points, depending on the extent to which he communicated a solution to the problem. Two aspects of the response were evaluated for the description of a

picture sequence - the degree to which the message was communicated and the quality of the message. The former was scored on a scale of three to zero points, and the latter considered the number of different verbs, adjectives and common nouns used correctly with regard to meaning, awarding one point for each. For the simulated telephone conversation, the student was evaluated according to the accuracy of the message he reported, being given one point for each piece of information up to a maximum of five points. The student was awarded for the selective listening context either one point or zero points depending on whether he correctly understood the announcement which applied to him and was able to react accordingly.

A composite score for the communicative competence test was determined for each student by totalling the individual points of the five subtests. This numerical value indicated his level of communicative competence. The students (N=30) were then categorized into four levels:[5]

Level I (N=8) covering a range of composite scores from 33 to 25;

Level II (N=8) covering a range of composite scores from 24 to 20;

Level III (N=6) covering a range of composite scores from 19 to 14;

Level IV (N=8) covering a range of composite scores from 13 to 8.[6]

Means and Standard Deviations of the Communicative Competence Subtest Scores

The means and standard deviations of the communicative competence subtest scores were calculated for each level of communicative competence. TABLE I presents a summary of the results. Visual examination indicates an apparent association between the level of communicative competence

and the mean scores of the information-getting, problem-solving and picture sequence subtests. That is, the higher the level of communicative competence, the higher the mean score of the three aforementioned subtests.

The problem-solving and picture sequence subtests are language production tests requiring students to employ, in particular, their knowledge of French interrogative forms and French vocabulary. The information-getting subtest, though both a language production test and a language comprehension test, primarily tested the students' ability to produce previously learned vocabulary. As observed by the researcher, students only comprehended the message communicated by the native speaker in highly predictable and easily recognizable situations. Thus, it may be concluded that students who demonstrate a higher level of communicative competence possess a greater knowledge of French interrogative forms and French vocabulary.

A similar relationship is not indicated between the level of communicative competence and the mean scores of the telephone conversation and selective listening subtests. The telephone conversation and the selective listening subtests are language comprehension tests involving the listening comprehension process. Since listening is an important element of communication, one would expect an apparent association between communicative competence and listening comprehension ability. However, as measured by these tests, a student's level of communicative competence is not necessarily indicative of his listening comprehension ability.

Individual Scores for the Communicative Competence Subtests

A more complete summary of individual scores for the communicative competence subtests is presented in TABLE II. The individual's score for each subtest was rated as either 'excellent', 'good', 'fair' or 'poor', according to the following scales:

1. Information-getting:	excellent = 14 to 11 good = 10 to 7 fair = 6 to 3 poor = 2 to 0
2. Problem-solving:	excellent = 3 good = 2 fair = 1 poor = 0
3. Picture sequence:[7]	excellent = 22 to 17 good = 16 to 11 fair = 10 to 5 poor = 4 to 0
4. Telephone conversation:	excellent = 5, 4 good = 3, 2 fair = 1 poor = 0
5. Selective listening:	excellent = 1 poor = 0

TABLE II indicates, more specifically, strengths and weaknesses within each group of students. As a group, Level I is characterized by an 'excellent' to 'good' rating for the information-getting, problem-solving and picture sequence subtests. As previously stated, these results may reflect the student's greater command of French interrogative forms and French vocabulary. However, this same group shows a weakness in listening comprehension as indicated by their generally 'fair' to 'poor' rating for the telephone conversation and selective listening

TABLE I: SUMMARY OF MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE SCORES FOR THE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE SUBTESTS FOR EACH LEVEL OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Communicative Competence Subtests	Level I Mean	S.D.	Level II Mean	S.D.	Level III Mean	S.D.	Level IV Mean	S.D.
Information-Getting	9.6	2.8	6.5	2.5	5.3	2.1	3.8	1.8
Problem-Solving	2.4	0.5	2.0	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.1	0.8
Picture Sequence	13.5	4.0	10.4	2.0	8.0	1.7	6.4	1.8
Telephone Conversation	1.5	0.8	2.0	1.0	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.9
Selective Listening	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5

TABLE II: SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE SUBTESTS IN TERMS OF EXCELLENT (E), GOOD (G), FAIR (F) AND POOR (P).

Level of Communicative Competence	Student I.D. No.	Information Getting	Problem Solving	Picture Sequence	Telephone Conversation	Selective Listening
I	T3S1	G	E	E	F	P
	T4S1	G	G	G	F	E
	T1S3	G	G	G	G	E
	T2S1	E	G	G	F	P
	T4S2	E	E	F	F	P
	T4S3	G	G	G	G	P
	T4S4	F	E	G	G	E
	T2S2	E	G	F	F	P
II	T4S6	G	G	G	G	E
	T3S2	F	E	G	F	E
	T3S4	G	F	G	F	E
	T5S1	G	F	F	G	P
	T2S6	E	F	F	F	P
	T1S6	G	G	F	G	P
	T2S4	F	E	F	G	P
	T3S5	F	E	F	G	P
III	T5S5	G	P	F	G	P
	T2S5	F	G	F	P	P
	T1S1	F	F	F	F	P
	T2S3	F	F	F	P	P
	T3S6	F	P	F	F	P
	T5S2	F	E	F	P	P
IV	T1S2	F	E	F	P	E
	T1S4	F	F	F	F	P
	T1S5	P	F	F	G	E
	T4S5	F	F	F	P	E
	T5S6	F	P	F	P	P
	T3S3	P	F	F	F	P
	T5S4	F	F	P	G	E
	T5S3	P	F	F	P	P

subtests.

The strengths and weaknesses of those in Level II are not as obvious. A 'good' rating is indicated for the information-getting and telephone conversation subtests. The problem-solving subtest covers a range from 'excellent' to 'fair', the picture sequence, 'fair', and the selective listening, 'poor'. One may conclude that students at this level of communicative competence have an inferior command of French interrogative forms and French vocabulary as compared with students in Level I. However, their listening comprehension ability may be slightly greater as reflected by the telephone conversation subtest.

A majority 'fair' to 'poor' rating for all subtests is observed for students in Level III. These results lead one to believe that students at this level demonstrate a notable weakness in the areas of French interrogative forms, vocabulary, and listening comprehension. Level IV is characterized by a similar 'fair' to 'poor' rating for the information-getting, problem-solving, picture sequence and telephone conversation subtests. On the other hand, the students' listening ability for the selective listening subtest appears to be slightly greater than that of the students at the other levels.

TABLE II further reveals that although homogeneity does prevail at each level of communicative competence, in each group there exists the individual who scores better or worse than the other group members for a certain subtest. Examples include: student T4S4 at Level I who achieved a 'fair' rating for the information-getting subtest; student T1S2 at Level IV, scoring 'excellent' for the problem-solving situation. Thus, perhaps a student's achievement in a second language should not be indicated by a single score.

Student Verbatim Responses for the Information-Getting, Problem-Solving and Picture Sequence Subtests

A deeper understanding of student performance on tests of communicative competence may be gained by studying the student verbatim responses for the information-getting, problem-solving and picture sequence subtests. The information-getting subtest was both an exciting and frightening experience for participating students as indicated to the researcher either by oral communication or body language. For the majority, it was the first time that they were able to use the French language in a real-life situation, communicating to someone who spoke only French. Students, in the Level I group, obviously benefited by their knowledge of French interrogative forms. However, the extent of their French vocabulary, though greater than in the case of students at other levels, limited them to asking questions concerning the family, occupation, age and preferences. Very few posed innovative questions not pertaining to the above categories. The students, themselves, realized that their lack of vocabulary was a hindrance to communication

and often asked the researcher, after the information-getting subtest, the French equivalent for a certain English word.

As previously mentioned, inadequate interrogative forms and lack of vocabulary impeded communication for the students in the remaining groups. Interjection of English words and increasingly shorter conversations were characteristic at these levels.

Peculiar to all levels of communicative competence, during the information-getting subtest, was, first, prevalent use of incorrect verb forms or tenses. This, however, did not interfere with communication. Second, a lack of coherency prevailed in most conversations, that is, there was no systematic connection between the native speaker's response and the student's next question. This would normally impede true communication. Third, irrelevant questions which did not elicit information about the native speaker, such as 'Quel temps fait-il?' and 'Quel jour est-ce aujourd'hui?', were asked. Fourth, although questions posed were comprehensible, answers given by the native speaker were not understood. Thus, students did not write down each piece of information about the native speaker revealed in the oral conversation. The reverse occurred when incomprehensible questions were asked; the native speaker reworded the question and gave an appropriate response. Students wrote down the information and thus benefited, though they never posed the correct question.

Finally, many questions which were understood by the researcher, an Anglophone, were not at all comprehended by the native speaker. This could be indicative of what takes place in the classroom; English-speaking students are able to converse in a classroom dialect of French

in spite of each other's mistakes but may not be understood by a Francophone in a real-life situation. Thus, contact with native speakers is an important classroom experience. This is a problem, formally recognized by some researchers (Swain, 1974, p. 125), namely that immersion students develop their own dialect of French. In being encouraged to express thoughts and ideas before mastering all the grammar involved, they produce and repeat expressions and structures not normally used. Swain suggests that more contact with French-speaking peers plus more directed instruction in the classroom could eliminate this problem.

Student verbatim responses for the problem-solving situation seemed to indicate that the extent of vocabulary for those in Level I was adequate to solve the problem. A lack of ingenuity or skill in devising a solution appeared to be the main hindrance to communication. Those in the remaining levels of communicative competence required ingenuity coupled with a more extensive vocabulary in order to succeed in solving the predicament.

Evaluation of the extent of a student's vocabulary is dealt with more specifically for the description of a picture sequence subtest. TABLE III presents a summary of the number of different verbs, adjectives and nouns correctly employed by each student in orally relating the story told by the pictures. Relying on her familiarity with the vocabulary requirements of the LFI series and the Alberta Education French Curriculum Guide, the researcher estimated that eleven verbs, five adjectives and fifteen nouns should be used to communicate adequately the meaning of the picture sequence. With this in mind, one may infer

that at Level 1, although the extent of vocabulary was greater than at other levels, it is still wanting. With each subsequent level of communicative competence, knowledge of French vocabulary decreased. Examination of the student verbatim responses and TABLE III indicates that there was also a diminution of the degree to which the message was communicated. It should be noted, however, that although the number of verbs, adjectives and nouns which a student employed usually reflected the degree to which the message was communicated, there were exceptions. Finally, the student verbatim responses revealed that, at all levels, English words were used to fill in the gaps where the French equivalents were unknown.

In summary, the performance on the communicative competence subtests indicated that:

1. Few of the students tested, primarily those at Level 1, displayed an ability to converse or correspond with a native speaker of the target language in a real-life situation and even when they could, their conversation or correspondence seemed to be of a limited nature, that is, confined to certain subject areas and restricted by the students' extent of French vocabulary and command of interrogative forms.
2. Most of the students tested demonstrated problems with respect to communication in the second language, the students' ability to communicate a message being hindered or completely impeded by an inadequate knowledge of French vocabulary and a lack both of interrogative forms and skill in using them.

TABLE III: SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS FOR THE DESCRIPTION OF A PICTURE SEQUENCE SUBTEST.

Level of Communicative Competence	Student I.D. No.	Quality of Message: No. of Verbs	No. of Adjectives	No. of Nouns	Communication of Message
	T3S1	5	1	12	3*
	T4S1	6	0	7	3
	T1S3	4	1	7	3
I	T2S1	5	0	5	2
	T4S2	3	0	5	2
(N = 8)	T4S3	6	0	5	2
	T4S4	6	0	5	2
	T2S2	3	0	3	2
	Totals	38	2	49	
	T4S6	4	0	5	2
	T3S2	4	0	7	3
II	T3S4	4	0	5	3
	T5S1	2	0	6	2
(N = 8)	T2S6	3	0	3	2
	T1S6	2	0	4	2
	T2S4	5	0	3	2
	T3S5	3	1	4	2
	Totals	27	1	37	
	T5S5	3	0	3	1
	T2S5	4	0	4	2
III	T1S1	3	0	3	2
	T2S3	4	0	2	1
(N = 6)	T3S6	5	0	3	2
	T5S2	2	0	3	1
	Totals	21	0	18	
	T1S2	2	0	3	2
	T1S4	5	0	1	1
IV	T1S5	0	0	6	1
	T4S5	3	0	2	1
(N = 8)	T5S6	2	0	3	2
	T3S3	4	0	3	2
	T5S4	0	0	2	1
	T5S3	1	0	3	1
	Totals	17	0	23	

* 3 = Clear, coherent and complete
2 = Incomplete (listener fills in gaps)
1 = Incomprehensible
0 = No response

3. Most of the students tested demonstrated problems with respect to listening comprehension ability, and a student's level of communicative competence was not necessarily indicative of his listening comprehension ability.

Generally, students performed better on the communicative competence subtests of language production than those of language comprehension. This difference in scores could be attributed to a greater amount of class time being spent on production activities as opposed to comprehension activities. As a result, students felt more comfortable as initiators applying attained vocabulary and skills in the information-getting, problem-solving and picture sequence subtests. On the other hand, the telephone conversation and selective listening subtests placed the student in an unfamiliar and more unique role as a receptor requiring him to employ his listening comprehension skill.

PERFORMANCE ON TESTS OF ATTITUDE TOWARD FRENCH STUDIES AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDE AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The student's attitude toward his French studies was assessed by a questionnaire designed for this purpose. Results of the test indicated 23.4 percent of the students with a positive attitude, 73.3 percent, a neither positive nor negative attitude and 3.3 percent, a negative attitude.

When the students were assigned to their appropriate level of communicative competence, the groups were examined for possible differences in attitude. Visual examination of TABLE IV indicates a greater number of students with a positive attitude toward French studies in

Level I. There were no apparent differences among the remaining groups. The researcher concluded that attitude toward French studies may reflect a student's communicative competence at a certain level. This conclusion corroborates Bartz's (1975, p. 60) finding that positive attitudes toward the study of German did show a significant relationship with communicative competence.

PERFORMANCE ON TESTS OF SELF-ASSESSMENT AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The student's perception of his communicative competence was determined using a self-assessment form. Results of the test indicated 90 percent of the students at 'Survival' level of confidence and 10 percent at 'Waystage' level of confidence. Thus, the majority of students did not perceive themselves as being able to participate in the range of social situations necessary to everyday life under normal conversational conditions. Rather, they felt that they could survive only "in highly predictable and easily recognizable transactional situations by producing and recognizing a set of words and short phrases learnt by heart" (Trim, 1980, p. 35).

A study conducted by Parker (1975, p. 57) revealed similar results. One hundred fifty-five students from seven different schools, enrolled in French programs at the grade nine level, were asked to respond to the following question: "When you finish Grade Twelve, do you think that you will be able to speak and understand French well enough to live in a French-speaking town or city without too much trouble?". Only 26 percent answered in the affirmative, 25 percent in the negative

and 49 percent were uncertain. These scores, too, related the students' lack of confidence in their ability to communicate, considering that at the end of grade twelve, they would have completed six years of studying French as a second language.

A summary for the frequencies and percentages of the responses to all the items of the self-assessment form is presented in TABLE V.

That personality variables such as varying degrees of self-confidence and ability to form valid judgements may be factors which affect the outcome of this assessment procedure has not been overlooked. However, it would seem that "most of us could give a pretty accurate appraisal of our own abilities in other languages that we know" (Upshur, 1975, p. 329).

Observations of the students' behavior and verbal comments were also recorded by the researcher during the five communicative competence subtests. Pecularities such as nervousness, embarrassment, flustered conduct, giving up and discouragement which indicate lack of confidence were prevalent among the majority of participants.

When students were assigned to their appropriate level of communicative competence, the groups were examined for possible differences in level of confidence. Visual examination of TABLE IV indicates no obvious differences among the four levels. Thus, it may be concluded from the results of the self-assessment test, that level of confidence did not appear to be related to a student's level of communicative competence.

TABLE IV: CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE LEVELS IN TERMS OF AGE, SEX, PERCENTAGE GRADE, ACHIEVEMENT, ATTITUDE AND LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE

Level of Communicative Competence	Attitude Toward French Studies*			Level of Confidence				Average Age	Sex		Percentage Grade		Achievement	
	P	NPNN	N	I	II	III	IV		No. of Males	No. of Females	Mean	Standard Deviation	No. of HA	No. of AA
(N = 8)[I]	4	4	0	0	1	7	0	14.8	2	6	85.0	6.59	7	1
(N = 8)[II]	1	6	1	0	1	7	0	14.6	2	6	70.0	10.98	2	6
(N = 6)[III]	1	5	0	0	0	6	0	15.2	4	2	73.7	8.48	3	3
(N = 8)[IV]	1	7	0	0	1	7	0	14.8	3	5	70.1	11.10	3	5

*No. of students are indicated for each category.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE OF STUDENTS AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEX OF STUDENTS AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

When students were assigned to their appropriate level of communicative competence, the groups were also examined for possible differences in age and sex. Visual examination of TABLE IV indicates no apparent difference in age or sex among Levels I, II and IV. The average age of Level III was six to eight months higher than that of the other levels. In addition, this level included more male than female participants. The reverse was true for Levels I, II and IV. Thus, age and sex of students did not appear to be related to a student's level of communicative competence.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCENTAGE GRADE IN THE FRENCH COURSE (ACHIEVEMENT) AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Each of the five instructors of French involved in the study, completed a questionnaire regarding her method of evaluation (APPENDIX A). All the teachers indicated that the student's achievement in French was represented by a percentage grade. The mark breakdown of the FSL program varied from 70 percent for written work and 30 percent for oral work to 50 percent for each category. Written evaluations consisted of quizzes on concepts such as vocabulary and grammatical structure, exercises from the workbook, dictées, major exams at the conclusion of units and projects like composing a child's short story or a letter and completing comic strips. Oral evaluation included presentation of

TABLE V: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FOR ALL ITEMS ON THE SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

ITEM	Yes_1	%	Yes_2	%	No.	%
1	2	6.7	18	60.0	10	33.3
2	25	83.4	4	13.3	1	3.3
3	12	40.0	14	46.7	4	13.3
4	6	20.0	19	63.4	5	16.6
5	8	26.6	19	63.4	3	10.0
6	6	20.0	12	40.0	12	40.0
7	-	-	9	30.0	21	70.0
8	12	40.0	12	40.0	6	20.0
9	6	20.0	15	50.0	9	30.0
10	29	96.7	1	3.3	-	-
11	8	26.6	14	46.8	8	26.6
12	2	6.7	15	50.0	13	43.3
13	17	56.7	13	43.3	-	-
14	19	63.4	11	36.6	-	-
15	13	43.3	16	53.4	1	3.3
16	6	20.0	15	50.0	9	30.0
17	19	63.4	10	33.3	1	3.3
18	3	10.0	15	50.0	12	40.0
19	-	-	8	26.7	22	73.3
20	9	30.0	16	53.4	5	16.6
21	13	43.4	12	40.0	5	16.6
22	3	10.0	11	36.6	16	53.4
23	9	30.0	12	40.0	9	30.0
24	9	30.0	14	46.7	7	23.3
25	3	10.0	11	36.6	16	53.4
26	22	73.3	7	23.4	1	3.3
27	18	60.0	11	36.7	1	3.3
28	18	60.0	6	20.0	6	20.0
29	16	53.3	12	40.0	2	6.7
30	13	43.4	16	53.3	1	3.3

text dialogues, presentation of dialogues created and prepared by the students, responses to class drills, oral reading and one-on-one exams between teacher and pupil. Most teachers expressed a difficulty in assessing oral skills. Aural evaluation was also conducted per listening exercises, often incorporated with the written or oral exams. One instructor, however, administered a separate aural exam at the conclusion of each lesson.

The percentage grade achieved by each student in the FLS program was recorded. Students were classified as High Achievers (HA), with a grade of 80% or better, and Average Achievers (AA), with a grade between 60% and 70%. When students were assigned to their appropriate level of communicative competence, the groups were examined for possible differences in mean percentage grade in the present French course and achievement. Visual examination of TABLE IV indicates a difference between Level I and the remaining groups with respect to mean percentage grade and achievement. Those in Level I who scored the highest composite score on the communicative competence subtests, also maintain the highest mean percentage grade in the French course and form the largest number of HA. There were no apparent differences between Level II and IV for mean percentage grade and achievement, though the two levels differed in total scores on the communicative competence subtests. The mean percentage grade and number of high achievers of Level III was slightly greater than that of Level II. From these results, it can be concluded that percentage grade in the French course and achievement may reflect a student's communicative competence only at the highest level.

A summary of the percentage grades and achievement classifications for the students, divided according to level of communicative competence, is presented in TABLE VI. Visual observation indicates that although Level 1 consists of the largest number of HA, both HA and AA are interspersed throughout all four levels of communicative competence. One may conclude that achievement level in the French course does not reflect the student's level of communicative competence. This conclusion suggests that either communicative activities are not an important component of the French course and thus, the HA and AA achievement levels reflect other curriculum components, or that communicative activities are occurring in the classroom but are not included in the teacher evaluation of the student's achievement.

Further observations of TABLE VI reveals that four of the six students chosen from one class (T4S1, T4S2, T4S3 and T4S4) achieved Level 1 of communicative competence. This grouping might indicate that the teacher's classroom approach to second language aquisition included communicative activities.

The mean percentage scores and the standard deviations of each communicative competence subtest were calculated for HA and AA. TABLE VII presents a summary of the results. Visual examination indicates that HA scored higher than the AA for the information-getting, problem-solving and picture sequence subtests, classified as language production tests. The AA attained the higher score for the telephone conversation and selective listening subtests, both language comprehension tests. One could conclude that students with a higher percentage grade in the French course were better able to

communicate in real-life situations which primarily involve oral skills. Further, percentage grade did not accurately determine a student's aural ability.

The foregoing conclusions may be contested by the results of the t test, summarized in TABLE VIII, which revealed no significant difference between HA and AA for the mean score of each communicative competence subtest, except the problem-solving subtest at the $p = 0.05$ level, and thus, no significant difference between HA and AA. Results of the t test may be interpreted as follows:

1. The communicative competence subtests administered by the researcher did not sufficiently differentiate student achievement classifications, HA and AA.
2. The teacher mark assigned to each student in the FSL program does not reflect his level of communicative competence, that is, his ability to communicate in a real-life situation.

Based on the results revealed in TABLE IV and TABLE VI, the researcher concludes that the latter interpretation expressed above is the more accurate. It appears that the percentage grade achieved by the student in the French course did not determine his level of communicative competence. In other words, students with a high grade were not necessarily more able to communicate in authentic situations than those with a low grade. However, one could assume that students with a high level of communicative competence, able to successfully communicate in real-life situations, also maintain a high percentage grade in the FSL program.

TABLE VI: SUMMARY OF STUDENT PERCENTAGE GRADES AND ACHIEVEMENT CLASSIFICATIONS, DIVIDED ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE.

Level of Communicative Competence	Student I.D.No.	Percentage Grade	Achievement
I	T3S1	87	HA
	T4S1	94	HA
	T1S3	83	HA
	T2S1	91	HA
	T4S2	82	HA
	T4S3	86	HA
	T4S4	72	AA*
	T2S2	85	HA
II	T4S6	62	AA
	T3S2	81	HA
	T3S4	65	AA
	T5S1	90	HA
	T2S6	61	AA
	T1S6	76	AA*
	T2S4	61	AA
	T3S5	64	AA
III	T5S5	67	AA
	T2S5	66	AA
	T1S1	80	HA
	T2S3	81	HA
	T3S6	65	AA
	T5S2	83	HA
IV	T1S2	87	HA
	T1S4	61	AA
	T1S5	57	AA*
	T4S5	61	AA
	T5S6	70	AA
	T3S3	77	HA*
	T5S4	65	AA
	T5S3	83	HA

*In four cases, the percentage grade for the student was slightly above or slightly below the limits set for HA and AA. This was mainly due to a lack of average students in the class. However, when interviewed, the second language teachers classified these four students as HA or AA respectively, although their grades did not so indicate.

TABLE VII: SUMMARY OF MEAN PERCENTAGE SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE SUBTESTS FOR HA AND AA.

Communicative Competence Subtests	HA (High Achievers)		AA (Average Achievers)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Information-Getting	7.1	3.8	5.7	2.3
Problem-Solving	2.0	0.8	1.4	1.0
Picture Sequence	10.7	4.4	8.6	2.6
Telephone Conversation	1.1	0.8	1.5	1.0
Selective Listening	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5

TABLE VIII: SUMMARY OF t STATISTIC FOR HA AND AA

RE: COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE SUBTESTS

Communicative Competence Subtests	Level of Achievement	N	df	Mean	Sum of Squares	t	p
Information-Getting	HA AA	15 15	28	7.1 5.7	198.84 75.45	1.23	NS*
Problem-Solving	HA AA	15 15	28	2.0 1.4	10.0 15.6	1.71	S'
Picture Sequence	HA AA	15 15	28	10.7 8.6	270.95 93.6	1.61	NS*
Telephone Conversation	HA AA	15 15	28	1.1 1.5	10.15 15.75	-1.14	NS*
Selective Listening	HA AA	15 15	28	0.3 0.4	2.95 3.6	-0.6	NS*

NS* - not significant

S' - significant at 0.5 level

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The findings with respect to the students tested and resulting from the interpretation of the data analysis are summarized as follows:

1. Most junior high students who achieved success in the FSL program demonstrated problems with respect to communication in the second language. Their ability to communicate a message was hindered or completely impeded by an inadequate knowledge of French vocabulary and interrogative forms as well as skill in using them.
2. Few junior high students displayed an ability to converse or correspond with a native speaker of the target language. Even when they could, their conversation or correspondence seemed to be of a limited nature, confined to certain subject areas and restricted by the students' extent of French vocabulary and interrogative forms.
3. Students who maintained the highest level of communicative competence possessed a greater knowledge of French vocabulary and interrogative forms than those in lower levels.
4. Most junior high students who achieved success in the FSL program demonstrated problems with respect to listening comprehension ability in the target language.
5. A student's level of communicative competence was not necessarily indicative of his listening comprehension ability.
6. More students who maintained the highest level of communicative

competence also possessed a positive attitude toward French studies than was the case at the lower levels.

7. The junior high students lacked confidence in their ability to communicate in the target language. They did not perceive themselves as being able to participate in the range of social situations necessary to everyday life under normal conversational conditions.
8. Age, sex and level of confidence did not appear to be related to a student's level of communicative competence.
9. Percentage grade or teacher mark awarded to a student in the French course, did not appear to reflect his level of communicative competence. Most students who maintained the highest level of communicative competence possessed a high percentage grade in the French course.
10. Percentage grade in the French course did not accurately reflect a student's aural ability.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter will present a summary of this study together with a review of the findings. Conclusions derived from the findings, implications both for education and for the teaching of communicative competence together with suggestions for further research will also be considered.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of communicative competence attained by junior high students in the French core program. Answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What level of communicative competence is attained by junior high students who achieve success in the FSL program?
2. What expectations about communicating in real-life settings do students hold for themselves?
3. Is there a relationship between teacher marks in the FSL program and the student's ability to communicate in authentic situations?

The study involved thirty grade nine students from five different schools enrolled in their third year of French in the County of Strathcona. Half of the subjects chosen were High Achievers (students

whose grade in the LFI series French course was 80% or better) and the other half were Average Achievers (those whose mark was between 60% and 70%).

Sex, age and percentage grade in the French course were recorded for each student. A questionnaire measuring attitude toward French studies was administered. The student's assessment of his ability to communicate in French in a real-life setting was determined using a self-assessment form. Finally, each pupil participated in a test which was developed to measure his level of communicative competence. This test consisted of five communicative contexts: information-getting via an interview with a native speaker; a problem-solving situation; a description of a picture sequence; a simulated telephone conversation; selective listening.

Each student's level of communicative competence was determined by totalling the scores of the five communicative competence subtests to arrive at a composite score. From these composite scores, four levels of communicative competence emerged. The nature of the students in each level was defined in terms of age, sex, mean percentage grade in the French course, achievement, attitude toward French studies and level of confidence. Specific skills pertaining to each level, as revealed by the communicative competence test results, were indicated.

A visual examination of each level was made to see if homogeneity existed. Apparent differences and similarities among the groups were noted. The mean communicative competence subtest scores for HA and AA were determined. Comparability of the two groups was assessed by the t test.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions derived from the findings are discussed in reference to the three questions posed in the problem of the study.

Question 1: What level of communicative competence is attained by junior high students who achieve success in the FSL program?

Most of the junior high students tested who achieved success in the FSL program demonstrated problems with respect to communication in the second language. Their ability to communicate was hindered or completely impeded by an inadequate knowledge of French vocabulary and a lack of skill in using it. Few of the students displayed an ability to converse or correspond with a native speaker of the target language. Even when they were able to do so, their conversation seemed to be of a limited nature, confined to certain subject areas and restricted by the students' extent of French vocabulary and interrogative forms.

Most of the junior high students tested demonstrated problems with respect to listening comprehension ability in the target language. Further, a student's listening comprehension ability did not necessarily indicate his level of communicative competence.

Students who maintained the highest level of communicative competence possessed a greater knowledge of French vocabulary and interrogative forms than those in lower levels. Also, more students who maintained the highest level of communicative competence possessed

a positive attitude toward French studies than was the case in the lower levels.

Finally, age, sex and level of confidence did not seem to be related to a student's level of communicative competence.

Question 2: What expectations about communicating in real-life settings do students hold for themselves?

The junior high students tested appeared to lack confidence in their ability to communicate in the target language. They did not perceive themselves as being able to participate in the range of social situations necessary to everyday life under normal conversational conditions.

Question 3: Is there a relationship between teacher marks in the FSL program and the student's ability to communicate in authentic situations?

The teacher mark awarded to the student in the French course did not reflect his level of communicative competence. Most students who maintained the highest level of communicative competence, also possessed a high percentage grade.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The application of the conclusions of this study are limited by the small size of the sample used (N=30). Furthermore, the communicative competence subtests, though previously employed by other

researchers and maintaining a high degree of face validity, have not yet been proven to be valid statistically. Both of these factors must be considered in evaluating the findings, conclusions and implications of this study.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

The aforementioned conclusions lead to the following implications for education and for teaching practices:

1. The communicative competence test performance of the study sample indicated difficulty with respect to communication in the second language. The cause may be that insufficient class time is devoted to authentic communication in real-life situations. Research suggests that students must have opportunities for communicative activities if they are to learn to communicate on their own. Examples of activities which would facilitate the implementation of communicative competence in the modern language classroom include role-playing or spontaneous dramatization in such contexts as making introductions at a party, asking a stranger for directions, ordering a meal, making a date and sending a telegram. Games, interviews, informal reporting such as telling a friend about a movie and problem-solving situations also provide opportunity for meaningful communication. Involvement of native speakers of the target language can add valuable authenticity to all of the foregoing activities.

Their participation can make students more aware of the skills that they will need when faced with a real communicative situation. To suggest that a percentage of the classroom time now devoted to second language instruction be replaced by the kinds of authentic communicative exchanges listed here would surely enhance the students' ability to communicate in the target language.

Practice in communication forces the student to abandon his security blanket of memorized dialogues and patterned phrases and to take greater risks in using the language. This vulnerable position necessitates a supportive classroom environment in which the student feels free to communicate. The conscientious second language teacher should be alerted to the need to create such an atmosphere. Relinquishing his role as questioner and interacting more with the students as individuals, displaying tolerance toward student errors during communicative activities and frank admission of his own errors, and giving students a sense of achievement and success in second language learning are steps which the teacher can follow toward authentic communication.

2. The students' difficulty with respect to communication in the second language appeared to be related to an inadequate knowledge of French vocabulary and interrogative forms. Over the three year period between Grade Seven and Grade Nine, the LFI series and the Alberta Education French Curriculum Guide present an extensive list of French vocabulary items including

interrogrative forms, common expressions, verbs, adjectives and nouns which the students are required to learn. The implication is that students are exposed to these vocabulary items but, once again, are not necessarily given the opportunity to use them in meaningful, real-life situations. Theoretical support for this position is provided by Jarvis and Hatfield (1971), Oller and Obrecht (1968) and Stevick (1976) who indicate that meaningfulness facilitates learning and improves retention.

3. That the junior high students lack confidence in their ability to communicate in the target language further implies that it is important for students to be given the opportunity to practice communication and for the teacher to create a supportive classroom environment conducive to authentic communication. Since students recognize the inadequacy of the FSL program to prepare them for real-life communication situations, a greater use should be made of student input to monitor the effectiveness of second language programs.
4. Students who maintained the highest level of communicative competence possessed a greater knowledge of French vocabulary and interrogative forms than those in the lower levels. This implies that with fewer words to draw from their own word banks, it becomes more and more difficult for students to convey a message. It is important that students internalize the vocabulary and interrogative forms by participating in meaningful communicative activities. As a result, low passing

grades become meaningless in terms of the student being able to use the language.

5. The communicative competence test performance of the study sample gave indication of difficulty with respect to listening comprehension ability. The implication may be that insufficient class time is devoted to nurturing the students' listening comprehension ability in the second language.

Mortimer Adler, in his book How to Speak, How to Listen, states that people generally assume that the ability to listen well is a natural gift requiring no training. He says that of the four elements in communication - listening, speaking, reading and writing - listening is learned first, is used most through life and is taught least through all the years of schooling. That listening is an important element of communication is recognized by large companies like the Sperry Corporation who invest considerable time and money in listening courses for all levels of its personnel (Adler, 1983). The company believes that deficiencies in listening and the ensuing failures of communication are a major source of wasted time, ineffective operation, miscarried plans and frustrated decisions. One could infer from this belief that deficiencies in student listening comprehension ability and the resulting failures of communication, as illustrated by the communicative competence test results, are a primary cause of ineffective second language learning and frustrated second language learners.

Proponents of the natural approach to language acquisition, too, recognize the importance of listening. They believe that listening ability is the basis for speaking ability and that teaching a language must begin with comprehension rather than production (Terrell, 1982, p. 124).

Second language teachers should also be aware that listening is an important element of communication and invest more time and effort in providing opportunities for students to exercise their listening comprehension ability.

6. As a student's level of communicative competence is not always indicative of his listening comprehension ability, it is possible to derive the implication that the second language program is failing to nurture this skill. Given that listening is an important element of communication, one would expect a student's level of communicative competence to indicate his listening comprehension ability. However, since the ability to listen and comprehend a message in the target language seems to be a prevalent weakness amongst most of the students, one is led to the implication that the division of the students into the four levels of communicative competence was based primarily on the scores for the production tests, that is, the results of the information-getting, problem-solving and picture sequence subtests.
7. That more students who maintained the highest level of communicative competence possessed a positive attitude toward French studies may imply that students are aware when they are

achieving competency with respect to communication in the second language. This experience of success generates a positive attitude toward the French program.

8. Percentage grade in the French course, mark awarded by the teacher does not appear to reflect a student's level of communicative competence. This leads to the following implications:

   a) The teacher mark reflects other language learning proficiencies such as linguistic competency and the student's ability to do well on discrete-point exams which test grammatical patterns and vocabulary items.

   b) The French program in which the students are presently enrolled does not foster communicative competence as one of its goals and thus evaluation of communicative competence is not represented by the percentage grade.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings and conclusions from this study suggest the following areas for further research:

1. A communicative competence exam could be developed for classroom use which is reliable, valid and practical.
2. Certain variables can affect the progress or success of individual learners with respect to communicative competence. Further research is needed to determine the second language program content necessary to achieve all aspects of communicative competence.

3. Observation of the second language classes from which the study subjects were chosen was not conducted before the administration of the communicative competence test. Long-range observation of second language classrooms might reveal the emphases which are being given to the different skills. Research following this procedure could disclose certain teaching variations which maximize the efficiency of the FSL program with respect to communicative competence.
4. Since the listening comprehension ability is an important component of communicative competence, teaching strategies for its development need to be observed and evaluated.
5. A study of the student responses for the statements of the self-assessment form could be conducted to determine whether the students accurately assessed their communicative ability. Research could also reveal whether a student's assessment of his own competence would be useful in judging the effectiveness of a FSL program.
6. A study could be conducted to determine the effect of teacher-student relationships on communicative competence in second language learning.

FOOTNOTES

1. In actual fact the 'traditional' approach was oral in nature involving a native speaker of the language who acted as a tutor to fairly affluent students.

2. In four cases, the percentage grade for the student was slightly above or slightly below the limits set for HA and AA. This was mainly due to a lack of average students in the class. However, when interviewed, the second language teachers classified these four students as HA or AA respectively, although their grades did not so indicate.

3. The 'Threshold Level' (Van Ek, 1975) represents one of seven generalized language proficiencies available for communication in any situation. This level is estimated to require 300-360 hours of study for a student beginning with no previous knowledge of the language, after which he "is able to participate simply but effectively in the range of social situations necessary to the normal everyday transactional and interactional needs of temporary visitors by producing and recognizing simple exponents of the functional and notional categories concerned under normal conversational conditions involving a foreign learner" (Trim, 1980 p. 35).

4. The first three levels of confidence are defined as follows:

Threshold: Students perceive themselves as being "able to participate simply but effectively in the range of social situations necessary to the normal everyday transactional and interactional needs of temporary visitors by producing and recognizing simple exponents of the functional and notional categories concerned under normal conversational conditions involving a foreign learner".

Waystage: Students perceive themselves as being "able to deal with a limited range of very common social situations transactional and interactional, eg. by producing and recognizing the simplest exponents of the notional and functional categories concerned in the required combinations appropriately and intelligibly, given goodwill and favorable conditions".

Survival: Students perceive themselves as being "able to secure satisfaction of limited needs in highly predictable and easily recognizable transactional situations, eg. by producing and recognizing a set of words and short phrases learnt by heart, and by making a limited number of lexical substitutions in fixed sentence frames" (Trim, 1980, p. 35).

5. These levels are accurate with respect to the group of students tested. However, in a larger range of second language learners, the students from this study would probably form one group that would be at a low level of communicative proficiency such as 'Survival' (Trim, 1980, p. 35) and the four levels of communicative competence could be subgroups of this larger group.

6. The numerical values indicated for each level of communicative competence were arbitrarily set and thus could be changed by the researcher if the study was repeated with a different group of students.
7. The numerical values indicated reflect the sum of the scores for both the degree to which the message was communicated and the quality of the message.

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APPENDIX A

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is the evaluation policy in your school regarding the FSL (French as a Second Language) program? (percentage of grade for written and oral work; type of mark - ie. percentage, letter grade; mark breakdown for quizzes and major tests; etc.)

2. Describe your procedures and techniques for assessing student progress in the FSL program.

APPENDIX B

ATTITUDE TOWARD FRENCH STUDIES QUESTIONNAIRE

Part A of Questionnaire

Please answer each of the following items by circling the letter of the responses which appears to be most applicable to you. Try to be as honest and as accurate as possible. Your answers are confidential and will not be seen by any individual teacher.

1. If I had the opportunity and knew enough French, I would read French magazines and newspapers:
   a) never
   b) not very often
   c) as often as I could
2. When I hear a French song on the radio, I:
   a) listen to the music, paying attention only to the easy words
   b) listen carefully and try to understand all the words
   c) change the station.
3. When I am in French class, I:
   a) volunteer answers as much as possible
   b) answer only the easier questions
   c) never say anything
4. I am studying French because:
   a) I think it will help me to better understand French people and their way of life
   b) I think it will some day be useful in getting a good job

c) A knowledge of two languages will make me a better educated person

d) It will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people.

5. If there were French-speaking families in my neighbourhood, I would:

a) never speak French with them

b) speak French with them sometimes

c) speak French with them as much as possible

6. If I had the opportunity to see a French play, I would:

a) go only if I had nothing else to do

b) definitely go

c) not go

7. If there were a local French TV station, I would:

a) try to watch it often

b) turn it on occasionally

c) never watch it.

8. If there were a French Club in my school, I would:

a) attend meetings once in awhile

b) be most interested in joining

c) definitely not join

9. I actively think about what I have learned in my French Class:

a) very frequently

b) hardly ever

c) once in a while

10. If it were up to me whether or not to take French, I:

    a) would drop it

    b) would definitely take it

    c) don't know whether I would take it or not

11. Considering how I study French, I can honestly say that I:

    a) do just enough work to get along

    b) will pass on the basis of sheer luck or intelligence because I do very little work

    c) really try to learn French

12. When I have a problem understanding something we are learning in French class, I:

    a) immediately ask the teacher for help.

    b) only seek help just before the exam

    c) just forget about it

13. If the opportunity arose and I knew enough French, I would watch French TV programmes:

    a) sometimes

    b) as often as possible

    c) never

14. I find studying French:

    a) not interesting at all

    b) no more interesting than most subjects

    c) very interesting

15. If French were not taught in school, I would:

    a) pick up French in everyday situations (ie. read French books and newspapers, try to speak it whenever possible, etc.)

b) try to obtain lessons in French somewhere else

c) not bother learning French at all

16. Compared to my other courses, I like French:

a) the most

b) the same as all the others

c) least of all

17. If my teacher wanted someone to do an extra French assignment, I would:

a) definitely not volunteer

b) definitely volunteer

c) only do it if the teacher asked me directly

18. During French Class, I would like:

a) to have a combination of French and English spoken

b) to have as much English as possible spoken

c) to have only French spoken

19. After I get my French assignments back, I:

a) always rewrite them, correcting my mistakes

b) just throw them in my desk and forget them

c) look them over, but don't bother correcting mistakes

20. If I had the opportunity to speak French outside of school, I would:

a) never speak it

b) speak French most of the time, using English only if really necessary

c) speak it occasionally, using English whenever possible

21. When it comes to French homework, I:

a) put some effort into it, but not as much as I could

b) work very carefully, making sure I understand everything

c) just skim over it

APPENDIX C

SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

Instructions: Imagine that you meet a French-speaking person from another country. The person does not know anything about you and your country. What would you be able to tell or ask the person in French? Indicate your ability to communicate in French by checking the appropriate response (Yes_1, Yes_2, No) for each statement. Important: Think in your mind how you would say it in French, before checking the appropriate response.

Yes_1 = Yes with no problems.

Yes_2 = Yes but with difficulty.

No = No.

	Yes_1	Yes_2	No
1. I can tell him when and where I was born.	___	___	___
2. I can spell my name in French.	___	___	___
3. I can describe my home to him.	___	___	___
4. I can tell him what kinds of food and drink I like and don't like.	___	___	___
5. I can tell him about my interests and hobbies.	___	___	___
6. I can tell him what I usually read (kinds of books, newspapers, magazines, textbooks)	___	___	___
7. I can ask him what newspapers there are in his own country.	___	___	___
8. I can tell him what I do in my free time.	___	___	___
9. I can tell him how to get to a certain place by bus.	___	___	___

		Yes_1	Yes_2	No
10.	I can tell him the time.	____	____	____
11.	I can ask him about the price of a ticket for a football game.	____	____	____
12.	I can tell him about things that might interest a tourist in my home region.	____	____	____
13.	I can ask him about his family.	____	____	____
14.	I can tell him about my family.	____	____	____
15.	I can tell him about my school.	____	____	____
16.	I can tell him about a movie I saw.(or TV program)	____	____	____
17.	I can tell him how I feel at the moment. (If I am hungry, tired, ill, etc.)	____	____	____
18.	I can ask him to help me arrange an appointment with a doctor.	____	____	____
19.	I can tell him that I take medicine regularly.	____	____	____
20.	I can tell him that I am tired and need some rest.	____	____	____
21.	I can ask him to repeat slowly what he just said.	____	____	____
22.	I can ask him about the pronunciation of a certain word.	____	____	____
23.	I can ask him to describe the climate in his country.	____	____	____
24.	I can ask him if he knows the price of a certain piece of clothing in his own country.	____	____	____
25.	I can tell him where he can have his car serviced.	____	____	____
26.	I can ask him to phone me some time.	____	____	____

		Yes$_1$	Yes$_2$	No
27.	I can ask for his telephone number and give my own.	____	____	____
28.	I can ask him the French word for some object.	____	____	____
29.	I can describe the weather conditions in the four seasons in my own country.	____	____	____
30.	I can tell him where he can eat and drink.	____	____	____

APPENDIX D

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE TEST

(FIVE SUB-TESTS)

1. INTERVIEW

Instructions: Give the student two sheets of paper and a pencil for note-taking and writing up of the interview.

Read to the student: For the next four minutes, you will interview a native speaker of French to find out as much as you can about him/her and his/her background. Try to conduct the interview in as natural a manner as you can, remembering to introduce yourself and to close the interview in an appropriate manner when I tell you that the four minute period is about up.

You should take notes as you ask questions and at the end of the interview, you will be given two minutes to write up in English all that you have found out about him/her.

Start recorder.

Wait 3 minutes and 50 seconds and Say: Your time is almost up, so you should now conclude the interview.

Wait 10 seconds and Say: Stop please.

Stop recorder and Say: Take 2 minutes to write down in English all that you have found out, about the person you just interviewed.

2. PROBLEM-SOLVING SITUATION

Read to the student: I am going to read about a situation in which you must imagine yourself to be. Situation: Your French teacher takes your class on a trip to Paris during the school spring break. The first day, you are with the class, on your way to see the Eiffel Tower. You stop to admire some items in a store window. When you look up, you realize you are alone. The class is gone! Desperately, you run about, trying to find them. A French policeman stops you and asks you what's wrong. What will you say to the policeman?

Say: You have one minute to organize your ideas.

Wait 1 minute and Start recorder.

Stop recorder when student is finished presenting his ideas.

3. DESCRIPTION OF PICTURE SEQUENCE

Read to the student: For this test, you will see a set of six drawings depicting a sequence of events. You must tell the story that the pictures tell. After you see the pictures you will have thirty seconds to study them and organize your thoughts, then you will be given two minutes to describe the pictured events.

Show the set of pictures.

Wait 30 seconds.

Start recorder.

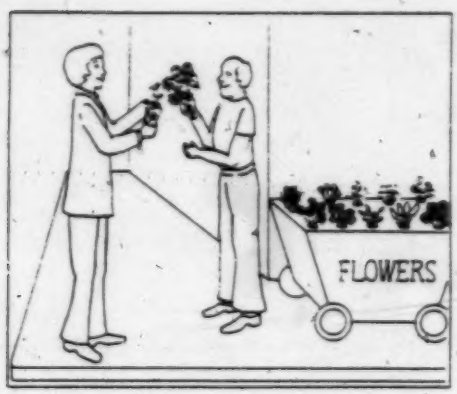
Wait 2 minutes and Stop recorder.

Bank of Montreal

1

Bank of Montreal

2


FLOWERS

3

4

TICKETS
NOW
PLAY

5

CAFE

6

4. SIMULATED TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

Instructions: Give the student a piece of paper and a pencil.

Read to the student: Imagine you are visiting a French family. You are at home alone when the phone rings. The person on the line insists on giving you a message. You will hear a recording of the message. Take notes as the person talks to you, and then write up the message in English to later relate to your host.

Play recording of the message.

Stop recorder and give the student sufficient time to write up the message in English.

5. SELECTIVE LISTENING

Read to the student: You are a tourist, travelling from Paris to Lyon. You are in a train, in the Paris railway station. You will hear a series of announcements as if over the loudspeaker. In the course of the announcements, there is a very important piece of information about your train. Listen carefully and I will then ask you to identify it.

Play recording of the announcements.

Stop recorder and ask student to identify the relevant piece of information.